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LETTER DATED 2 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a press communiqué of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, dated 27 May 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

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Annex

PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In accordance with the Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-building Measures (1994), the Russian Federation conducted two inspections, one from 7 to 9 May on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia and the other from 16 to 19 May on the territory of Albania. The purpose of these inspections was to establish the extent of the military activities being carried out there.

The Russian party could not but note during these inspections that unprecedented violations of both the spirit and the letter of the Vienna Document have been committed both by the parties hosting these inspection missions and by the representatives of the NATO forces. For example, in violation of the provisions of paragraph 81 of the Vienna Document, the Russian inspection group was denied the right to carry out aerial inspections, in both Albania and Macedonia. The representative of the NATO ground forces command in Macedonia, Brigadier Giovanetti (Italy), denied the group access to all sectors where NATO units were deployed. Likewise, the group was unable to implement the inspection measures provided for in the Vienna Document, for example, to assess the quantity of weapons and establish contact with troops. In Albania, the representative of the United States prevented the group from visiting the United States forces and establishing contact with the "Hawk" operational group command, and from inspecting Rinas international airport.

In a particularly flagrant violation of the provisions of the 1994 Vienna Document, the Macedonian party did not inform the other States members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe that the overall number of NATO troops deployed on its territory exceeded the level set by the Vienna Document in connection with military activities - levels that are subject to notification and must be observable.

The Russian party believes that these actions are deliberately designed to reduce the transparency of the armed forces of the Alliance and to evade the monitoring provided for by the Vienna Document.

Such actions represent a severe blow to the entire system of political and military commitments provided for by the Vienna Document, which is one of the most important instruments guaranteeing stability in Europe. In particular, it has become clear that the States members of NATO, which have always said that the Vienna Document was applicable under any circumstances, are not actually willing to see it applied to a crisis situation.

The Russian party strongly condemns the unlawful actions of the representatives of NATO and of Macedonia and Albania. The Russian Federation will draw practical conclusions from these inspections, which it will take into account in the negotiations.

27 May 1999